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Beverly Eaves Perdue  
Governor

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Dee Freeman  
Secretary, DENR

# PARKS' ATTENDANCE TOPS 14 MILLION

A staggering economy...a lack of hurricanes...a new reservations system; any one or all of the above may have contributed to a record year for attendance at the state parks in 2009.

The state parks system reported 14.17 million visits during the year, a jump of 13 percent over 2008, and up 5 percent from the previous record of 13.4 million set in 2007.

There's also the relentless population growth in North Carolina and the increasing demand for outdoor recreation. Over the past 25

years, the state parks system has seen a dramatic 238 percent increase in visitation.

In 1984, 5.9 million people visited state parks and state recreation areas.

"It's obvious North Carolinians and visitors to our state recognize the inherent value our state parks offer in terms of affordable family experiences and respite from a difficult economy," Gov. Bev Perdue said in an official announcement. "And, every visitor to the state parks can

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## NC PARKS JOIN NATIONAL EFFORT

Like other states across the country, North Carolina's funding for its state parks has been reduced in recent years due to budget cutbacks and challenging economic conditions. Some states have scheduled state park closings due to massive funding reductions.

To raise awareness about the plight of state parks systems across the country, North Carolina has joined a national effort to mobilize and educate the public and policy makers on the positive impact state parks have on public health and local economies.

Millions of Americans who rely on state parks for outdoor activities risk losing access to cherished natural and recreational assets as budgets are slashed. In response, the America's State Parks alliance ([www.americasstateparks.com](http://www.americasstateparks.com)) was created by the National Association of State Park Directors (NASPD) to counter that threat to

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### PHOTO CONTEST

THE ANNUAL PHOTO CONTEST CO-SPONSORED BY STATE PARKS YIELDED GREAT IMAGES SUCH AS THIS ONE FROM FALLS LAKE STATE RECREATION AREA BY JASON BUTLER. MORE ON PAGES 8-9.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources

# ***PRESCRIBED BURNS AT RECORD PACE***

North Carolina's state parks system conducted prescribed burns on a record 1,879 acres in 2009, the system's 25<sup>th</sup> year of wildland fire management, and has set a 2,500-acre goal to improve habitat and reduce wildfire

danger in 2010.

The launch of the state's 2010 Wildland Fire Management Program coincided with Prescribed Fire Awareness Week Feb. 7-13, declared by Gov. Bev Perdue as the first statewide recog-

nition of the importance of prescribed burning in North Carolina.

The aggressive prescribed burn program in 2009 that conducted 32 separate burn events in 10 state parks was due largely to involvement in the federal Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program that supported a five-person wildland fire crew specifically for state parks.

This year's fire crew has been assembled as well, and notably, one of the system's largest burns was conducted in January at Crowders Mountain State Park.

"Over time, state parks have been testament to the value of low-intensity, prescribed burning in improving ecosystems and habitat and lessening the danger of uncontrolled wildfires," said Lewis Ledford, state parks director.

"As stewards of some of the most treasured natural resources in North Carolina, we have a responsibility to ensure our prescribed burn program is effective."

Prescribed burns have been used as a resource management tool in state parks since 1974 because some plant communities and animal species are dependent on periodic, low-intensity fires for their existence.

Prescribed burns also limit the amount of dead wood and other natural fuels on the forest floor.

## **From The Director's Desk**

As the news arrived that attendance at state parks topped a record 14 million in 2009, the question quickly followed whether it could be attributed to the rough economic times. It's a natural question, especially from the media, and although we can't quantify it, anecdotes suggest there's at least some connection between a deep recession and visits to very-affordable state parks.

But like so many things, it's more complicated than that. You might also credit the parks' determination not to let tight budgets affect the visitor experience any more than necessary, as well as a renewed emphasis on visitor service and the rollout of a new reservations system.

There are less obvious but equally important contributions to record attendance, and several of them are suggested in stories in *The Steward* this month. There is the story of state parks as a place for education as well as recreation, with 44 of our rangers and other staff newly certified as environmental educators. (And, those folks have earned congratulations and a "well done" for all the hard work involved in that process.) There is the announcement of the "Year of the Birds" that has built excitement over the interpretive programs in 2010. New and improved visitor facilities at the parks certainly contribute to visitation. There are the resource management efforts that keep the state parks so attractive to those who appreciate nature, reflected in statistics about a record year for prescribed burning and a record effort at litter removal. Then, there's the commitment to partnerships such as the innovative one with the N.C. Coastal Federation at Jones Island. The more people are invested in state parks, the more reasons they'll find to go visit them.

So, record attendance is more than just counting heads at the park gates. It's a sign of a deepening relationship between the state parks system and the citizens and visitors of North Carolina. People will tend to visit again and again those places that they love the best.

Sincerely,



Lewis Ledford



# PARK PROJECTS ARE EDUCATION BONUS

## 44 PARK RANGERS EARN CERTIFICATION AS EDUCATORS

A trash-free beach, self-guided nature walks, trail improvements by energetic scouts. They're just a sampling of the fortunate byproducts of the state parks system's environmental education certification program.

Forty-four state park rangers earned the coveted certification this spring through the state Office of Environmental Education. They represent more than a quarter of all certifications granted in the state.

And, each represents a hands-on project that involves partnership with an outside group to improve the state parks. Since 1999, when the certification process began, hundreds of such projects have been devised and carefully planned by creative rangers.

With more than 200 hours of workshops and intensive training required, it generally takes two or three years for a new ranger to earn certification. Every ranger and park superintendent is either certified or enrolled for certification, and the state parks system has more veteran environmental educators working with the public than any other state agency.

The "action partnerships" involve a lot of planning, creative thought, raising funds and hard work.

For example, Ranger Ed Wilkerson recruited Webelo Pack 238 of Roanoke Rapids to help him create a tree identification course on an existing trail at Medoc Mountain State Park. What was anticipated as a 20-hour project turned into 80 hours, Wilkerson said.

At Jockey's Ridge State



*RANGER ANN WUNDERLY, LEFT, GETS HELP FROM A VOLUNTEER WHILE INSTALLING A SERIES OF INTERPRETIVE SIGNS.*

Park, Ranger Ann Wunderly's project was to design and install interpretive signs on the Kitty Hawk Woods Coastal Reserve managed by the park.

"These interpretive signs have helped create an even better outdoor classroom for use by school groups and the public, providing more information and helping to educate about maritime forests and barrier islands," she explained.

Ranger Jacob Vitek at Hammocks Beach State Park is still working on his certification. He's launching an attempt at a trash-free beach on Bear Island by educating visitors to carry out all trash as they leave.

The project's success could save the park considerable expense in trash collection as well as be an improvement in natural resource protection.

Over the years, projects have also included recycling centers, nature trails, wildlife observation facilities and native

plant gardens.

Aside from these projects, certification demands attendance at seven workshops of 10 hours each. Also required are some 110 hours of related training and study.

Although many of the workshops are held in state parks – and often attended by teachers and others seeking certification – state budget restrictions on travel can make the whole process even more challenging at times.

But, the result is a higher level of professionalism, say educators. And, it signals the state parks system's commitment to education as a central part of its mission.

Aside from other duties, park rangers regularly prepare interpretive programs for visitors. They're also often involved in preparing displays, trailside exhibits and multi-media programs and planning for exhibits in visitor centers.





*JONES ISLAND SITS IN THE MOUTH OF THE WHITE OAK RIVER, AN ATTRACTIVE LURE TO VOLUNTEERS HELPING WITH A CLEANUP PROJECT AND OYSTER BED RESTORATION.*



## ***JONES ISLAND DRAWS VOLUNTEERS***

Volunteers seem drawn to it, and the oysters seem to like it.

It's Jones Island, a commanding 22-acre presence squatting in the mouth of the White Oak River, a long stone's throw from Swansboro and a short boat ride from Hammocks Beach State Park.

It has been prime habitat for rare bird and plant species, an American Indian camp, a hangout for locals and most recently, a for-profit campground that didn't make much profit.

Now, through a creative partnership with the N.C. Coastal Federation, Jones Island is reinventing itself as an environmental education outpost and living laboratory that expands the reach of the state park.

"We want to make Jones Island a strong component of the education effort at Hammocks Beach," said Sam Bland, a retired ranger and superintendent at the state park, who now works part-time for the environmental action group.

Bland was helping supervise a group of 15 volunteers clearing brush and debris on the island on a recent weekday morning. This began the second season of intense cleanup on the island along with construction of oyster reefs and beds.

Roughly 17 acres on the island became part of the state park in 2007 with the help of the Coastal Federation, a Clean Water Management Trust Fund Grant and a donation of 10 acres held by Audubon North Carolina. One small tract remains in private ownership.

On prominent bluffs at the island's cen-

ter, the former owner had built a campground with two tiny cabins, a modest bathhouse and a couple of sheds protecting pop-up campers, all of it hauled by boat from the mainland.

"We had to decide whether to tear down the buildings and let it all grow back or what," Bland said.

With its network of energetic volunteers, the Coastal Federation offered to help develop the island's education potential. So far, more than 700 hours of volunteer labor have stabilized the small buildings and some of the shoreline.

More importantly, several hundred feet of manmade oyster reef now help protect the upstream and downstream shorelines. Layers of

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 5*



*A VOLUNTEER HAULS AWAY BRUSH CUT ON A RECENT WORKDAY THAT DREW 15 PEOPLE TO HELP.*

# TNC SECURES YELLOW MOUNTAIN TRACT

The Nature Conservancy announced the acquisition in December of 466 acres that ultimately will be part of the Yellow Mountain State Natural Area in Avery County.

At 5,504 feet, the summit of Little Yellow Mountain is one of the higher peaks in the Southern Appalachians and a valuable addition to a larger corridor of protected land in the Greater Roan Highlands area, much of which is classified as nationally significant by the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program.

It is also an important acquisition from an aesthetic perspective. It can be seen prominently from other landmarks, including the Appalachian Trail and the conservancy's Big Yellow Mountain Preserve.

"This is a keystone tract, with a high conservation value," said David Ray, the conservancy's mountain project director. "It provides a safe corridor for wildlife movement and protects natural communities and rare plants that are found in the area."

"It would have been very noticeable if it had been logged or developed."

The property's role as a wildlife corridor is one of the things that attracted the Open Space Institute to the project. The New York-based non-

profit provided a \$1.2 million, low-interest loan for the acquisition.

Little Yellow Mountain is part of the Audubon Society's Roan Mountain Important Bird Area boasting species such as the Canada warbler, the chestnut-sided warbler, the blackburnian warbler and scarlet tanager. The Roan area is also noted for the fall broad-winged hawk migration.

Mixed hardwood forests of yellow birch, sugar maple and northern red oak run along the mountain's slopes. Its summit is an open area covered in sedges, grasses and wildflowers.

Yellow Mountain State Natural Area was authorized by the N.C. General Assembly in 2008 as a unit of the state parks system.

It will also benefit by an acquisition of the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy of about 850 acres in two tracts along the Avery-Mitchell county line just west of U.S. 19 and south of Pisgah National Forest.

The Little Yellow purchase builds on more than three decades of preservation work in the highlands, resulting in 19,000 acres of protected land. The Nature Conservancy began working in the area in 1975 in joint projects with the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy.

## JONES ISLAND

*CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4*

marl and recycled oyster shells offer a place for live oysters to attach and do their job of cleaning the water and providing marine habitat.

The oysters also offer an opportunity for hands-on learning for adult and children's groups who help build the reef and explore coastal ecology.

More than 10,000 bushels of oyster shells have been distributed with the help of a federal stimulus grant through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Hammocks Beach has solid environmental programs focused on the marsh estuary out its back door and the endangered sea turtles that nest on its beaches. Bland said the island's inshore ecology offers lessons about different habitats and different environmental issues.

Park superintendent Paul Donnelly said that the Coastal Federation has taken the lead on island programming and the park staff has been more involved in logistics including transporta-



*A FEW SMALL BUILDINGS REMAIN NESTLED IN TREES.* tion of visiting groups. A memorandum of understanding with the environmental organization will be drafted to more clearly define responsibilities.

Sarah Phillips of the Coastal Federation said it's a high-profile project for the group and fits well with its overriding emphasis on water quality.



# LITTER PICKUP TOPS 67,800 POUNDS

Volunteers and park staff collected 67,800 pounds of litter from state parks in 2009, according to a report prepared by the DOT's Office of Beautification Programs.

Also, 25,902 pounds of recycled materials were collected at recycling stations in the state parks.

Although litter pickup is an ongoing effort in all the state parks, the NC Big Sweep program was responsible for the bulk of the litter collection success. Eight state parks held big sweep events in 2009, signing up school groups, scouts and community volunteers to scour waterways and natural areas for trash in a one-day, concentrated blitz.

For example, high school students were among a Big Sweep group that collected 910 pounds of trash during a day at Jordan Lake State Recreation Area.

Over the year, 755 volunteers were involved in collecting 6,333 bags of litter.

All state parks are required to have recycling stations where visitors can deposit aluminum, plastic, glass and paper refuse.

The 25,902 pounds collected included more than 13 tons of aluminum, more than three tons of plastic and three tons of glass and more than four tons of paper.



SCHOOL GROUP WORKING AT KERR LAKE SRA.

Lake Norman State Park collected the most recycled materials, 3,740 pounds total.

State parks also look for non-traditional ways of recycling. At Haw River State Park, which operates a residential environmental education center, more than 300 gallons of used cooking oil was sent to a commercial recycler.

And, at several coastal parks, empty oyster shells are regularly recycled to build habitat for new oyster reefs.

Park rangers also provide educational programs specifically designed to prevent litter and encourage the reduction of solid waste.

These programs reached 3,345 school students and park visitors in 2009.

## YOUNG POETS SING PRAISES OF MOUNTAIN

More than 300 young poets in Ashe County submitted their work this year in the poetry contest held by Mount Jefferson State Natural Area and supported by Friends of State Parks.

North Carolina's outgoing Poet Laureate Kathryn Stripling Byer served as a judge for the finalists and offered critiques of many of the poems. Winners collected backpacks and other prizes made available by the friends group.

"What every mountain needs is young poets like (these) to celebrate it every year! Mount Jefferson is one lucky mountain," Byer said.

"I had a terrible time splitting hairs among these poems. I stood at my kitchen counter shuffling and re-shuffling poems. So many good ones! How could I choose?"

First place went to Addie Fairchild of Westwood Elementary School:

*I feel the seasons.  
I feel the winter coldness on my face,  
The trees that cover me are frozen.  
My nose is frosty,  
The air is windy  
The snow is all around me.  
I feel the spring breeze through my hair,  
From the bottom up I'm green all over.  
Animals waking everywhere,  
Flowers all around me.  
I feel the summer sun on my shoulders,*

*People climbing on my peak.  
The fiery warmth touches me day and night,  
Picnics on my tree covered skirt,  
Fireflies all around me.  
I feel the chill of fall through my ruffled coat,  
As time changes, days get shorter.  
Leaves are falling through the air,  
The temperature is dropping down low,  
Bright colors all around me.*

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# 'YEAR OF THE BIRDS' IN STATE PARKS

North Carolina state parks will pay tribute to its winged residents and visitors in 2010 by celebrating the "Year of the Birds."

Throughout the year, birds and bird-watching will be the focus of special education programs and activities in the state parks, many of them in partnership with Audubon North Carolina, which works with the state parks system on research and management projects involving bird habitats.

The state parks system is also making available a special bandana of some of the signature birds found in the parks. It's available through the system's Web store at [www.ncparks.gov](http://www.ncparks.gov).

Be they wild turkeys in the mountains, bald eagles in the piedmont or piping plovers on the coast, birds greatly contribute to the nature experience in state parks. They're also "indicator species," reflecting the health of the natural resources and ecosystems on North Carolina's publicly held lands.

"Putting this special emphasis on birds in 2010 can give added depth and clarity to our interpretive programs and education efforts," said Lewis Ledford, state parks director. "They're a beloved part of the natural resource mosaic in



BIRDWATCHING AT HAW RIVER STATE PARK.

our state parks."

State parks are regularly involved in annual bird counts, and the parks are among Audubon's Important Bird Areas, sites for research about the health of bird populations and habitats.

Audubon North Carolina, the state parks and the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission were also among partners establishing three distinct birding trails in North Carolina as an effort to combine eco-tourism and natural resource protection.

"Birds and state parks share some of the important habitats in our state," said Chris Canfield, executive director of Audubon North Carolina. "They'll also share the distinction of providing a pathway for people to connect with nature. I'm excited by this focus for 2010 and hope all North Carolinians take advantage of it."

In addition to preparing interpretive programs, state park rangers and natural resource biologists are actively involved in projects to protect and restore habitats for some of our rare and threatened birds, such as the red-cockaded woodpecker and colonial nesting shorebirds. And, they participate in multi-year bird tagging projects.

State park educational programs hope to appeal to North Carolina's bird enthusiasts, as well as inspire new birdwatching families.

A 2009 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service report estimated one of every five Americans is a "birdwatcher," define as someone who took a trip of at least one mile for the primary purpose of observing birds, or someone who closely observed and tried to identify birds around their home.

These enthusiasts contributed \$36 billion to the national economy in 2006, according to the report.

## POETS

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Brianna McCoy of Blue Ridge Elementary School captured second place:

*Listen quietly and you will hear nature's whispering call. A musical sound that no doubt brings joy to us all.*

*The rippling brook gurgles quietly the water seems to say Peace, Peace, Peace. A doe takes a drink from the gurgling brook and swivels her head to take a look at her fawn, who is sheepishly trying to hide while peeking out from his mother's side.*

*A grey squirrel is alarmed to hear the call of the wise old owl. He must gather acorns for he knows that winter is near!*

*The old owl watches the grey squirrel, amused by his alarm. As he glides swiftly down to hunt, mice scurry all about.*

*So you see Mount Jefferson Nature has its own song, to show us the way that the mountain animals end their winter days.*



# 'BEST IN STATE PARKS'

*PHOTOGRAPHER JESSE POPE STOOD ON GRANDFATHER MOUNTAIN TO GET THIS STRIKING SHOT OF PILOT MOUNTAIN STATE PARK.*



The views from Grandfather Mountain are always spectacular, but on a clear January morning, you can literally see from one state park to another.

Jesse Pope, a longtime employee of the Grandfather Mountain attraction, aimed his Pentax K100B toward Pilot Mountain State Park on such a dawn in 2007 and captured the image that won Best in State Parks during the annual photo contest co-sponsored by Wildlife in North Carolina magazine, the N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences and the state parks system.

Pope used a 2-3 second exposure and an old 300 mm, f2.8 lens with no filter. The viewpoint was from the employee parking lot at the

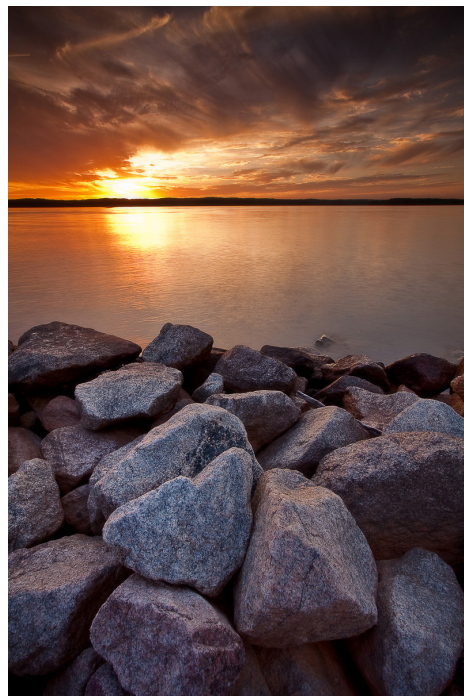
attraction "looking over the Town of Blowing Rock," he said.

This black-and-white version does not do the image justice. The color version, with its striking warm orange sky, is in The Steward online at [www.ncparks.gov](http://www.ncparks.gov).

The image foreground is on Grandfather Mountain State Park, the state's newest upon the purchase of backcountry acreage with its trail system from the attraction in 2009.

The photo contest for 2009 drew nearly 9,000 entries. All images taken in state parks were set aside for consideration for Best in State Parks. Published here are some of those worthy of honorable mention.

*DAVID MCRARY OF BURNSVILLE CAPTURED A DUSTING OF SNOW FROM HIS VANTAGE POINT ON MOUNT MITCHELL (BELOW). JULIAN DE LA ROSA III EXPLORED THE ROCKY SHORELINE OF JORDAN LAKE (RIGHT).*







*JACK RILEY OF RALEIGH CAPTURED FALLS LAKE STATE RECREATION AREA (LEFT). A HERON AT JORDAN LAKE WAS THE SUBJECT FOR REED GOODWIN-JOHANSSON OF BURLINGTON (BELOW LEFT). JANE BEST OF MORGANTON SAW THE IMAGE BELOW AT SOUTH MOUNTAINS STATE PARK.*



*CHRIS TISINGER OF WILMINGTON CAUGHT A LAZY MOMENT AT LAKE WACCAMAW STATE PARK (BELOW). ROBERT SWORDS OF RALEIGH SPOTTED A REFLECTIVE POOL NEAR THE SUMMIT OF GRANDFATHER MOUNTAIN (RIGHT).*



# WEBINAR MULLS CLOSED STATE PARKS

The prospect of closing state parks has loomed in at least a half dozen states in recent months as state legislators everywhere grapple with budget shortfalls.

It's a sobering thought for park supporters, park users and park administrators everywhere, and was the subject of a national webinar Feb. 18, staged by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA).

Panelists included Lewis Ledford, director of North Carolina's state parks, and Ruth Coleman, California's state parks director, as well as state park foundation officials from California and Arizona.

California narrowly avoided the closing of more than 200 parks in 2009 and expects to face the possibility again this year. Arizona will likely face the closing of some, if not all, of its parks this year.

"What's happening with some state parks can be a bellwether for what can happen in any state," said Rich Dolesh, the NRPA moderator for the webinar.

Public outcry follows most any declaration to close



president of the California State Parks Foundation. "There's no question that Californians demonstrated again and again that state parks are absolutely critical to them."

But Coleman, the parks director, said total public support can't be taken for granted. If a state parks system begins cutting services because of budget cuts without clear explanation, "the public feels they're being punished for not supporting parks," she said.

Coleman added there is some corporate support available but it's limited in scope, and not usually available for operating budgets. Business like high-visibility, limited projects, she said.

"They love to plant trees. But we're the state parks. Most of our places have enough trees," she said.

In Arizona, which

charges entrance fees to state parks, legislative proposals called for salvaging only those parks with strong revenues. Many state residents are familiar with smaller parks in remote areas, so public support is uneven, according to Bill Meek, chairman of a state parks foundation there.

The foundation is trying to portray state parks as economic engines in these rural areas, he said.

Ledford said that a well-timed 2008 economic study by North Carolina State University revealed that North Carolina's state parks contribute at least \$400 million annually to local economies.

That's a strong argument for the state parks when coupled with the system's strong partnerships and credibility built over time.

Ledford said that the state parks systems' best chance to send a clear, concise message may be the "America's State Parks" collaboration of the National Association of State Parks Directors. Its Web site and Facebook presence allows the state parks systems to talk directly to constituents, he said.

## STATE PARKS

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outdoor recreation.

In North Carolina, a record 14.17 million visitors went to state parks in 2009. It represents an annual economic impact of \$400 million, reflecting the value North Carolinians place on affordable outdoor recreation, according to the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation.

Nationally, more than

725 million Americans visited state parks in 2009, demonstrating strong demand for budget-friendly outdoor recreation and cultural tourism within easy access to home.

"North Carolina has a deep-rooted tradition of protecting its stunning natural resources and making them accessible at low cost to citizens and visitors," said Lewis Led-

ford, state parks director.

"The results of that tradition, which led to the acquisition of 46,340 acres over the past eight years, include healthier lifestyles, economic stimulus to communities where state parks are located and a strong conservation ethic."

The America's State Parks alliance will work col-

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take pride in this state's long history of conservation of its remarkable natural resources."

The state parks system manages more than 208,000 acres, including 34 state parks and four state recreation areas and a system of state natural areas dedicated to conservation of rare resources. Through its New Parks for a New Century initiative, six new state parks have been added to the system since 2003.

Among the parks and recreation areas, 22 reported increases in attendance in 2009. Jockey's Ridge State Park reported the highest attendance at 1.4 million visits, an increase of 2 percent over last year.

Other parks with significant increases were Cliffs of the Neuse State Park in Wayne

**AMONG THE PARKS AND RECREATION AREAS, 22 REPORTED INCREASES IN ATTENDANCE IN 2009. THE HIGHEST ATTENDANCE WAS REPORTED AT JOCKEY'S RIDGE AND FORT MACON STATE PARKS.**

County (42 percent), Crowders Mountain State Park in Gaston County (58 percent), Jordan Lake State Recreation Area in Chatham County (52 percent) and Mount Mitchell State Park in Yancy County (77 percent).

The popular summit area of Mount Mitchell reopened in 2008 upon the completion of a new observation deck at the highest point in the eastern U.S.

Behind Jockey's Ridge in total attendance were Fort Macon (1.3 million), Jordan Lake (1.2 million), Kerr Lake

(1.1 million) and Falls Lake (954,399).

The record attendance figures drew considerable attention in the media, with most reports linking the growth to the recession.

Superintendent Ed Farr at Stone Mountain State Park told the *Winston-Salem Journal*, "We do notice changes in attendance as the economy changes. People tend to stay closer to home. Going to a state park is a quality recreation activity, but it's inexpensive. It's free to come in and free to hike."

There's another economic aspect to high attendance at state parks, said Lewis Ledford, state parks director.

"Beyond the quality recreation experience, health benefits and exposure to the natural world, state parks also offer economic benefits to the local communities where they're located," he said. "A 2008 economic study revealed the state parks system has an annual economic impact of more than \$400 million, much of it in direct contributions to local tourism economies."

The study by North Carolina State University's Department of Parks Recreation and Tourism Management determined that tourist visitors spend an average \$23.56 a day to enjoy the state parks.

The complete study can be found at [www.ncparks.gov/news/media\\_room](http://www.ncparks.gov/news/media_room).

## STATE PARKS

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laboratively to share resources, best practices and engage in national partnerships with corporations for stewardship programs, aiding state parks during a time of budget shortfalls and strong demand for state park experiences.

Partnerships with corporations can help preserve many of America's most prized natural assets through their affiliation and sponsorship of programs such as reforestation, trail preservation and maintenance and solar-energy installations.

"Building state parks creates jobs and operating state parks stimulates outdoor recreation and tourism spending. That translates to a huge boon to our local economies," said NASPD President Joe Elton,

director of Virginia State Parks.

"In 2009, visitors to state parks across America helped create a \$20 billion economic impact, which is an incredible return on investment given that the overall budget expenditure nationally is less than \$2.3 billion."

Often called "America's backyard," state parks protect many of the nation's most prized natural assets – beaches, mountains, forests and lakes – giving Americans convenient access to public lands. They allow states to become active in resource conservation.

Also, local governments view state parks as "clean economic development" that brings tourist dollars while requiring little investment in infrastructure and services.

# MEETING EXPLORES STORYTELLING IDEAS

Ten state parks system staff members took part in a regional conference of the National Association of Interpretation (NAI) in Asheville in February, thanks to generous support of the Friends of State Parks.

The four-day conference allowed staff to learn from workshop session on such topics as “incorporating arts into interpretation” and “engaging high school students as volunteers.”

“I left the NAI conference refreshed and ready to try out some great new ideas. I was inspired by so many wonderful speakers,” said Ranger Nora Coffey of Lake James State Park.

The state parks system has a limited training budget this year that would have allowed only one or two participants in the conference. The support from the friends group allowed a much

broader representation by park rangers and interpretive specialists.

The regional workshop theme was “Climbing Mountains, Crafting Stories,” and it brought together some of the most creative and dedicated park educators from Virginia to Louisiana.

NAI is the leading professional association for those involved in interpreting natural and cultural heritage in parks, nature centers and historic sites. Worldwide, NAI has more than 4,500 members from 30 countries.

From the state parks system, attendees included Superintendent Joe Shimel, rangers John Fullwood, Sandra Fambrough, Kevin Bischof, Nora Coffey, Lance Huss, Robert McGraw and Tom Randolph and interpretive specialists Becky Holmes and Sean Higgins.

## THREATS FROM TICKS CAN BE MINIMIZED

*By Laura J. Leonard*

*Division of Environmental Health*

Spring, summer and fall are wonderful times of year in North Carolina, but with the warmer weather come those pesky critters called ticks.

It is important to take the necessary precautions to prevent being bitten by ticks, which carry serious diseases.

“North Carolina is home to more cases of Rocky Mountain spotted fever than any other state,” said Nolan Newton, chief of the Public Health Pest Management Section in the Division of Environmental Health. “Lyme disease, ehrlichiosis, anaplasmosis and other tick-borne diseases can also be found in the state. Surprisingly, tick-borne illness actually affects many more North Carolinians than mosquito-borne illnesses.”

At home or work, reduce your likelihood of tick-borne illness by covering as much of your skin as possible whenever you are outside.

Newton suggests that field staff wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts, tucking pant legs into socks and tucking in shirt tails. A pair of tall boots that can be laced over the pant cuff military-style is also effective.

For occupational exposure to ticks, permethrin treatment of clothing is the most reliable tick repellent.

“These are common, everyday steps you can take to prevent tick-borne illness,” Newton said. “Anytime you are outside, whether it is

mowing the grass or touring children around a park, follow these tips. You can also use a repellent containing DEET on your skin or one with permethrin on your clothing; but be sure to follow the label directions when applying repellent.”

Prompt removal of ticks helps to prevent infection. To find and remove ticks:

- Check yourself and your children often when outdoors and quickly remove any ticks. Pay particular attention to the nape of the neck, behind the ears, and the groin, which are favorite places for ticks to attach.

- Use fine-tipped tweezers or shield your fingers with a tissue, paper towel or rubber gloves.

- Grasp the tick as close to the skin surface as possible and pull upward with steady, even pressure. Do not twist or jerk the tick. This may cause the mouthparts to break off and remain in the skin. Do not squeeze, crush or puncture the body of the tick.

- Do not use matches, hot nails or other folk methods for tick removal. They will not make a tick let go and may cause the tick to release disease bacteria into the bitten area.

- After removing the tick, thoroughly disinfect the bite site and wash your hands with soap and water.

- Make a note of the date you removed the tick and see your doctor if you become ill after being bitten. Although generally not used for

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 14*



# McBEAN PROMOTED AT GRANDFATHER

Sue McBean, formerly superintendent of Haw River State Park, has been named the first superintendent of the newly authorized Grandfather Mountain State Park.

A superintendent is the chief of operations and administration at a state park or state recreation area with wide-ranging responsibilities for staffing, training, law enforcement, visitor services, natural resource protection and environmental education.

"Sue has done an outstanding job of guiding the development of Haw River State Park, created in 2005, being directly involved in developing staff and creating a draft master plan and building a close relationship with the local community," said Lewis Ledford, state parks director.

"Her skill and experience will be invaluable as we fashion our newest state park on one of the most beloved landmarks in the state."

Grandfather Mountain State Park was authorized in June following the acquisition of 2,456 acres along the crest of the famous mountain from the Morton family's Grandfather Mountain Inc. A new nonprofit foundation will continue to operate the attraction alongside the new state park.

The scenic property in Watauga, Avery



and Caldwell counties is laced with a 12-mile network of popular hiking trails and a series of remote campsites.

A native of Cleveland, Ohio, McBean graduated in 1987 from Ohio State University with a bachelor's degree in natural resource management. She worked in seasonal positions for the U.S. Forest Service and for state park systems in Ohio, South Dakota, Massachusetts, California, Colorado and Alaska before joining North Carolina's state parks system in 1993.

She worked as a ranger at Jordan Lake State Recreation Area before being promoted as superintendent at Haw River in June 2006. She holds certifications in environmental education and advanced law enforcement and has been a law enforcement instructor for the division.

"Haw River has been a tremendous experience for me and it's with great sadness that I'm leaving that wonderful staff and supportive community," McBean said. "I am, however, very excited to be making a move to the North Carolina mountains and I look forward to the new and different challenges that Grandfather Mountain will provide."

As the first superintendent at Grandfather Mountain, McBean will be involved in forming a citizens park advisory committee, hiring initial staff and developing management plans in conjunction with the Grandfather Mountain attraction staff.

# MEYER TO LEAD MEDOC MOUNTAIN

Bill Meyer, a veteran ranger at Kerr Lake State Recreation Area, has been promoted to superintendent of Medoc Mountain State Park in Halifax County. Meyer succeeds Joe Shimel, who as named superintendent at New River State Park in July.

A superintendent is the chief of operations and administration at a state park or state recreation area with wide-ranging responsibilities for staffing, training, law enforcement, visitor services, natural resource protection and environmental education.

A native of Ohio, Meyer graduated from Ohio State University in 1981 with a bachelor's degree in forestry and natural resource manage-



ment. He worked as a forestry consultant before joining the state parks system in 1987 as a seasonal employee at William B. Umstead State Park.

He became a ranger at the Kimball Point recreation area at Kerr Lake later that year. He holds certifications in environmental education and advanced law enforcement.

"Bill has long experience in law enforcement, education and natural resource protection along with a genuine appreciation of our mission," said Lewis Ledford, state parks director. "His skills and his knowledge of north central North Carolina will be highly valued at the growing Medoc Mountain State Park."

Medoc Mountain State Park was established in 1972 and now encompasses 3,892 acres. It recorded 65,101 visits in 2009.

# PEARSON AT NEW CARVERS CREEK PARK

Janet Pearson, a veteran ranger at Pilot Mountain State Park, has been named the first superintendent of Carvers Creek State Park in Cumberland County.

A superintendent is the chief of operations and administration at a state park or state recreation area with wide-ranging responsibilities for staffing, training, law enforcement, visitor services, natural resource protection and environmental education.



“Janet has gained broad experience in both protection of natural resources and the con-

servation and interpretation of cultural resources at Pilot Mountain, and she is adept at forging good relationships with the community,” said Lewis Ledford, state parks director. “Her skill and experience will be valuable as we move forward with plans for the new state park at Carvers Creek in partnership with land conservancies, Cumberland County, Fayetteville and Ft. Bragg.”

Carvers Creek State Park was authorized in 2005 upon the acquisition of 1,173 acres off U.S. 401 north of Fayetteville with the help of The Nature Conservancy. Additional property now held by the conservancy, including the 1,380-acre James Stillman Rockefeller estate, will likely expand the park to about 4,500 acres.

The state parks system is drafting a master plan for initial park development.

Pearson is a native of the Pilot Mountain area and a 2000 graduate of Western Carolina University with a bachelor’s degree in parks and recreation management. She worked in seasonal positions for the state parks system and as an interpreter for the Horne Creek Living Historical Farm before becoming a fulltime ranger at Pilot Mountain in 2000.

She holds certifications in environmental education and intermediate law enforcement and was the lead natural resource ranger and volunteer coordinator at the park.

As the first park superintendent at Carvers Creek, Pearson will be involved in forming a citizens park advisory committee, hiring initial park staff and developing a long-range master plan and general management plan. She will establish an interim park office at Weymouth Woods Nature Preserve in Moore County.

## THREATS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

deciding if antibiotics are necessary, you can save the tick for later identification. Place the tick in a sealed plastic bag and put it in your freezer or drop it in a small container of alcohol.

Symptoms of Rocky Mountain spotted fever may include sudden onset of fever, headache, and muscle pain, followed by development of a rash. Symptoms of Lyme disease may include “bull’s-eye” rash accompanied by nonspecific symptoms such as fever, malaise, fatigue, headache, muscle aches and joint aches.

Other tips for reducing tick habitat around the home include:

- Mow the lawn often to keep grass short, clear brush and leaf litter under trees, and keep the ground under bird feeders clean.

- Keep playground equipment well inside yard edges, away from trees.

## ‘PARK’ IT

WITH A STATE PARKS  
SPECIALTY LICENSE TAG



*The Division of Motor Vehicles is accepting applications and payment for these special license plates. There is a \$30 fee in addition to regular license fees (\$60 for personalized plates). Additional fees support conservation through the Parks and Recreation and Natural Heritage trust funds.*

**Information at [www.ncparks.gov](http://www.ncparks.gov)  
or [www.ncdot.org/dmv](http://www.ncdot.org/dmv)**

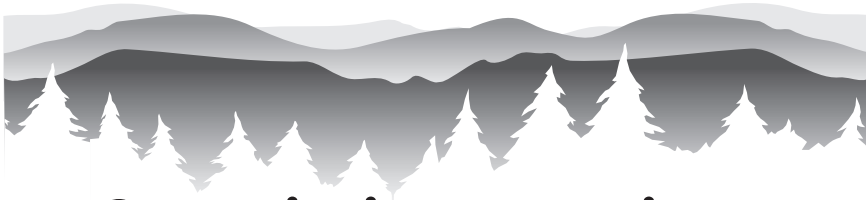


# NORTH CAROLINA STATE PARKS

## MONTHLY ATTENDANCE REPORT

### DECEMBER, 2009

NC STATE PARK	December 2009	TOTAL Dec-09	December 2008	TOTAL Dec-08	% CHANGE (2009/2008) Dec YTD	
Carolina Beach	22,560	499,916	22,168	464,838	2%	8%
Chimney Rock	3,051	202,336	6,891	206,626	-56%	-2%
Cliffs of the Neuse	6,507	181,730	5,253	127,571	24%	42%
Crowders Mountain	16,841	551,397	17,946	349,389	-6%	58%
Dismal Swamp	2,094	53,672	2,182	33,754	-4%	59%
Elk Knob	857	22,349	320	6,004	168%	272%
Eno River including Occoneechee Mountain	20,366	403,125	18,506	414,301	10%	-3%
Falls Lake	20,196	954,399	13,302	788,843	52%	21%
Fort Fisher	11,965	749,949	14,248	667,818	-16%	12%
Fort Macon	34,692	1,391,210	47,116	1,181,234	-26%	18%
Goose Creek	15,226	211,962	10,354	177,933	47%	19%
Gorges	3,555	74,803	1,030	18,403	245%	306%
Hammocks Beach	1,657	117,100	4,881	124,374	-66%	-6%
Haw River	942	23,273	542	26,170	74%	-11%
Hanging Rock	7,258	389,165	12,818	447,689	-43%	-13%
Jones Lake	1,256	52,684	1,194	63,696	5%	-17%
Jordan Lake	70,730	1,232,688	38,540	810,869	84%	52%
Jockey's Ridge	31,816	1,438,864	34,574	1,403,781	-8%	2%
Kerr Lake	24,264	1,153,920	38,632	1,154,164	-37%	-0%
Lake James	13,138	387,367	12,271	375,108	7%	3%
Lake Norman	18,594	508,545	23,892	493,365	-22%	3%
Lake Waccamaw	3,785	91,779	3,984	72,802	-5%	26%
Lumber River	4,896	95,496	5,052	80,304	-3%	19%
Merchants Millpond	10,045	204,595	14,632	227,977	-31%	-10%
Medoc Mountain	2,364	65,101	2,628	56,697	-10%	15%
Mount Mitchell	1,247	322,079	3,568	181,924	-65%	77%
Morrow Mountain	11,000	406,070	12,360	380,220	-11%	7%
New River including Mount Jefferson	7,430	271,828	10,766	270,010	-31%	1%
Pettigrew	3,316	57,108	3,237	60,599	2%	-6%
Pilot Mountain	9,223	482,332	13,366	390,345	-31%	24%
Raven Rock	6,990	176,691	6,336	121,577	10%	45%
Singletary Lake	1,183	25,677	490	29,668	141%	-13%
South Mountains	6,176	189,012	7,322	178,780	-16%	6%
Stone Mountain	9,392	429,704	13,676	326,968	-31%	31%
Weymouth Woods	3,757	48,471	3,693	50,285	2%	-4%
William B. Umstead	52,586	782,411	56,967	722,732	-8%	8%
<b>SYSTEMWIDE</b>	460,955	14,248,808	484,737	12,486,818	-5%	14%



## ***Our Mission Remains...***

to protect North Carolina's **natural diversity**;  
to provide and promote **outdoor recreation**  
opportunities throughout North Carolina;  
to exemplify and encourage **good stewardship**  
of North Carolina's natural resources for all  
citizens and visitors.

*8,000 copies of this public document were printed  
at a cost of \$562.00 or \$0.07 per copy.*

## ***SAFETY ZONE***

### **PREPARE YOURSELF FOR TICK SEASON**

- ✓ Use a repellent with DEET, picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus. Wear long sleeves and long pants in the woods.
- ✓ Check yourself at least every six hours when outdoors. Pay particular attention to the nape of the neck and behind ears.
- ✓ To remove ticks, use fine-tipped tweezers, getting as far forward near the head as possible.
- ✓ If you have any symptoms of tick-borne disease in the month following a tick bite, seek medical help.

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